

## KCK Pet Help Program Position Statement

The KCK Pet Help Program opposes breed-specific legislation because it doesn't work. It is time to trust Wyandotte County/KCK pet owners and believe they can make the best decisions for their families. Breed-based restrictions do nothing to address problems but rather take beloved dogs away from families who want them. Trying to address problems in a community by targeting dogs by breed is a poor strategy, and it doesn't improve public safety or animal welfare. In fact, no jurisdiction (state or local) with BSL has ever been able to demonstrate an increase in public safety or a significant reduction in population of banned dog breeds. Breed-based laws are costly and difficult to enforce and add to an already overburdened and under-resourced animal services system. Managing dog behavior and protecting public safety are serious responsibilities for officials, and residents of KCK want a safe community. We sympathize with victims of dog bites and attacks and their families, and the tragedy and injury they have endured motivates us even more to advocate against policies we know will not work. Not only does BSL not help to achieve those goals, it actually moves communities further away from safety because it provides a false sense of security and wastes critical resources.

A number of dog bite-related fatalities have occurred in jurisdictions with BSL already on the books, proving it doesn't increase the community's safety and is a distraction from addressing more fundamental laws. In fact, the dog-bite related fatality that occurred in KCK in 2006 occurred *after* the ban was put in place more than 28 years ago. As the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) notes in its report on community dog-bite prevention, "singling out 1 or 2 breeds for control can result in a false sense of accomplishment. Doing so ignores the true scope of the problem and will not result in a responsible approach to protecting a community's citizens" (2001). Breed-based policies are not founded on science or credible data, but on myths and information surrounding different breeds. Their impact on dogs, families and animal shelters, however, is heartbreakingly real. Experts have found that no breed is more likely to bite than another. The AVMA, the National Animal Control Association, the Kansas Animal Control Association and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention oppose BSL along with leading animal welfare organizations.

Many of the jurisdictions with the longest standing BSL openly admit that it doesn't work and that it actually causes harm. BSL has a backlash effect which does more to create dangerous dogs than to prevent them, because it drives owners of those dogs farther away from public places and services they need to socialize their dogs and keep them healthy (like spay/neuter and vaccinations). It keeps dogs tethered in backyards and crated in basements, out of the public eye. It creates shame and hardship for dog owners, casts stereotypes and negative perceptions, and is bad for neighborhood and community relations. Breed bans and restrictions force dogs out of homes and into shelters, taking up kennel space and resources needed by animals who are truly homeless. Underfunded animal control agencies bear the burden of enforcing the laws, and are often called on to decide, based on looks alone, whether a dog belongs to a certain breed. Battles erupt between dog owners and local agencies—and often continue to the courts—costing the community resources that could have been spent on effective, breed-neutral dog laws and enforcement. Animal shelters in jurisdictions with BSL remain flooded with legally unadoptable dogs, and shelters in neighboring cities and counties usually end up taking in the dogs from places with bans, like a shell game. Even animal welfare programs which target by breed with the best of intentions have found it to be counter-productive.

"Pit bull" dogs are just dogs like any other and should be treated as individuals. It is impossible to predict if a dog is dangerous based on its looks and not its behavior. In December 2014, the Unified Government of Wyandotte County/KCK enacted a dangerous dog ordinance, which is much more effective means of addressing dogs that exhibit dangerous behavior regardless of breed. It does not make sense for the UG to continue to have both ordinances on the books when the dangerous dog ordinance is effective and the breed-ban has proved an ineffective waste of resources.

Lastly, more than 82% of Wyandotte County residents are in favor of a repeal of the breed ban according to a survey that the UG conducted in 7 of its 8 districts in 2016. The 7<sup>th</sup> district was not surveyed about this topic because most of that part of the county, which includes Bonner Springs and Edwardsville, has already repealed their breed bans.

## KANSAS

City	Population	Year
Belleville	1,895	2019
Beloit	3,835	2018
Shawnee	65,194	2016
Linwood	375	2016
Tonganoxie	5,165	2016
Baldwin City	4,540	2016
Edgerton	1,700	2016
South Hutchinson	2,552	2015
Roeland Park	6,800	2015
Lansing	11,642	2015
Fairway	3,882	2015
Wellsville	1,834	2014
Spring Hill	5,730	2014
Garden City	27,000	2014
Bonner Springs	7,500	2014
El Dorado	12,852	2014
Basehor	4,898	2013
Osawatomie	4,385	2013
Garnett	3,307	2013
Seward County	23,390	2011
Topeka	127,679	2010
Edwardsville	4,355	2008
Wellington	8,172	2008

## OTHER KANSAS CITIES THAT DO NOT HAVE BSL

Lawrence  
Leavenworth

## OTHER MISSOURI CITIES IN KC METRO THAT HAVE REPEALED

Belton  
Grandview  
Greenwood  
Riverside  
Liberty (ballot initiative April 2019)  
Although not in KC Metro, Springfield, Mo., voted down a pit bull ban in August 2018.